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SUBJECT: TURCOMAN - UNIFIED IN KIRKUK, DIVIDED IN BAGHDAD -REMAIN
FRUSTRATED BY LAND DISTRIBUTION POLICIES

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Islamic Turcoman Union represents most Shia Turcoman in Kirkuk. The party works with other Turcoman parties on issues locally but is aligned with the Unified Iraqi Alliance in Baghdad. The Shia Turcoman remain frustrated with the perceived bias and indecision in the land distribution process in Kirkuk. End Summary.

ISLAMIC TURCOMAN UNION (ITU)

¶2. (SBU) IPAOs met with Shia Turcoman and Kirkuk provincial council member Tasin Kahiya. Kahiya is a member of the Islamic Turcoman Union, which holds four seats in the Council of Representatives. Kahiya said the ITU has two goals: first, remove the injustices of the Iraqi Turcoman; and second, remove the injustices of all Iraqi Shia. His party is aligned with the Unified Iraqi Alliance (UIA) in Baghdad but works closely with all Turcoman in Kirkuk.

TURCOMAN PARTIES DIVIDED ON POLITICAL STRATEGY

¶3. (C) When asked how the ITU differed from the Iraqi Turcoman Front (ITF), Kahiya said the ITU, unlike the ITF, had strategic goals for Iraq. The ITF was merely "a reactionary group" that focused excessively on current events to formulate its policy. He argued that the ITF had limited the Turcoman voice at the national level because of its decision to run independently in the December 2005 national elections. As a result, the ITF acquired only one seat, while the ITU gained four seats by uniting with the UIA. Kahiya predicted that if the ITF did not reform, the party was likely to continue to lose influence.

UNFAIR LAND DISTRIBUTION POLICIES

¶4. (C) Kahiya complained that many Kurds continue to move to Kirkuk and grab land illegally. He confessed that the Kurds had the legal right to move into Kirkuk, as long as they did not trespass or squat on others' land. He qualified his stance, however, adding that due to political sensitivities it was immoral for non-resident Kurds to populate Kirkuk in the run-up to the 2007 referendum.

15. (SBU) In describing the Iraqi Property Claims Commission (IPCC), Kahiya said it was a lazy organization that was unable to resolve many of the claims given to it. A major problem, according to Kahiya, was that the legislation was poorly written. For example, the former regime took much of the land for "public use," and the current law does not recognize these claims. Kahiya said the Turcoman have met with the Council of Ministers in an effort to prevent the IPCC in Baghdad from reviewing additional cases until these deficiencies were accounted for and resolved.

LEADERSHIP NOTES

16. (SBU) Kahiya is a politburo member of the ITU. He served as the Kirkuk provincial council chairman for two years before Iraq's first provincial elections in January 2005. Kahiya is from the Tisin neighborhood in Kirkuk. He graduated from a technical institute and later gained an advanced degree in religious studies. Kahiya is in his third year of law school at Kirkuk University. Kahiya fled Iraq in 1981 when the Ba'ath Party pursued him on execution orders. He remained active in the Iraqi Opposition community from 1981 to 2003. Kahiya in 1991 helped form the ITU, which is a break off from the Da'wa Party.

17. (SBU) Abbas Bayati, who was elected to both the Transitional National Assembly and Council of Representatives, leads the ITU. He served on the TNA's foreign relations committee, traveling often in that position. Bayati graduated from a nursing institute and later gained a master's degree in religious studies. Bayati is a prolific writer and hails from Diyala.

18. (SBU) Jasim Muhammad Jafar, Iraqi Minister of Housing and Construction, serves as Bayati's deputy in the ITU. He is from Tuz in the Salah ad Din province and earned a master's degree in

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civil engineering. The ITU is lobbying to keep Jafar in his ministerial position in Iraq's permanent government. Bayati, Jafar, and Kahiya compose the top tier leadership of the ITU. ITU membership is primarily reserved for Shia Turcoman. The party prefers to work with other sectarian or ethnic parties as counterparts rather than co-opting them into their party.

COMMENT

19. (C) Kahiya displayed an antagonistic stance toward the ITF, which reflects the political and ideological divide that exists between Shia and Sunni Turcoman. Kahiya substantiated our assumption that the Shia Turcoman are aligned with the Turcoman on Kirkuk issues and the Shia coalition at the national level. The ITU's ability to acquire four seats in the Council of Representatives, while the ITF - having a larger Turcoman constituency - gained only one seat, helped to validate the ITU's claim of superior strategy at maximizing the Turcoman voice at the national level.

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